ORPHAN RACHEL,

OR

FRUITS OF PERSEVERANCE.

Embellished with Cuts.

PROVIDENCE:
PUBLISHED BY GEO. P. DANIELS.
1838.

Miss Harriet Hooker

from her teacher

C. H. Hoag

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CHILDREN'S BOOK
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LOS ANGELES

FRONTISPIECE.

A STUDIOUS GIRL.

A WALK IN THE FIELDS.

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OR

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"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." —PROVERBS, ix. 10.

RACHEL MAITLAND was sitting beside her blind grandfather, knitting warm woollen stockings for his use against the ensuing winter; a book lay open before her, from which she was endeavoring to acquire the French language without the assistance of a master.

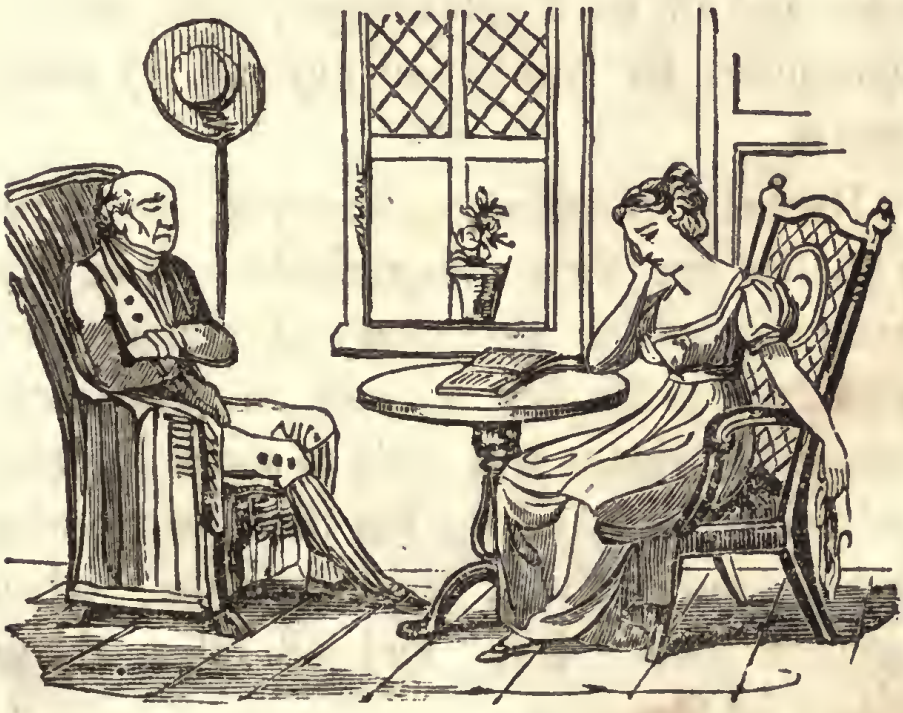
Now, some of my readers may feel a little incredulous respecting the possibility of this double employment; but knitting forms one of the easiest amusements of the blind; consequently those who enjoy the blessings of sight, can knit and read at the same time, with the greatest facility, if they possess any skill in that useful art.

Still Rachel was pursuing a dry study of her own accord, which too many learn only as a task; but then she possessed an enquiring mind, and the straitened circumstances of her grandfather denied her the advantages of a liberal education. Thus, with an ardent desire to obtain information, she was left entirely to her own resources for its acquirement.

The recent death of her good and pious grandmother, had engaged Rachel, at the early age of fifteen, in those active duties which the mistress of a family is always called upon to perform. The time she had hitherto spent in endeavoring to acquire knowledge, was now devoted to the comforts of her aged grandfather; for Rachel had been early taught to discriminate between what was right, and what only appeared to be so from the inclination she felt to pursue it. She knew there was no absolute necessity for her becoming an accomplished woman, while an actual reason existed for her becoming a useful one.

This afternoon, however, she did not feel so happy and contented as usual. Was it

that the autumnal sun was flinging his bright beams through the casement, and that she pined to share the pure bracing air of a September afternoon with some companions of her own age? No! for the same gay sunbeams glittered upon the silver hair of her grandfather, who was sleeping in his easy chair, and whose afternoon slumbers she was accustomed to watch. His infirmities had doubly endeared him to Rachel, and she loved him too well ever to wish to leave him.



Rachel iu trouble.

What then could occasion the discontent now visibly painted on the expressive coun-

tenance of the orphan? The fact was, that she experienced some new difficulty in learning the French language, and she wanted some one to explain the meaning of the words that puzzled her.

At this moment she dropped her knitting, and leaning her aching head on her hands, pushing the book from her, half determined to give up the attempt altogether. This state of mind was followed by discontent and repining, and she began to contrast her situation and all its disadvantages, with the opportunities for instruction enjoyed by many others.

Rachel's conscience, however, soon reproached her for her ingratitude to Him who had provided her with food and raiment, and who had given her a book of instruction, whose knowledge was able to make her wise unto salvation; and she felt that the learning to be acquired there, would endure "when tongues should fail," and all other things should be forgotten.

She wept, while she thought of these unthanked-for mercies, and taking down the bible, resolved to compose her mind with

reading a chapter, before she continued her work.

It happened that she opened at these words: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding;"—and this sentence seemed to reprove her repinings, and to carry conviction and consolation to her heart.

Rachel then resumed her employment, and soon overcame the difficulty that perplexed her so much; indeed, the time we often spend in vain lamentation, when any little trouble befals us, would generally set every thing right again, if we applied it properly.

Rachel's grandfather had spent a great part of his life on the sea, and after he had gained a genteel competence, had retired to his native place, and married an amiable woman, with whom he hoped to have spent the rest of his days in peace. By this lady Mr. Maitland had a son, whom he regarded with an affection that rendered him completely blind to his faults.

Yet Michael Maitland was of a temper that required to be controlled; his uncorrect-

The Village.

ed faults, as he grew older, strengthened into crimes, and his unhappy father soon found that the ill habits his son had acquired in childhood, were not easily to be eradicated in maturer years.

He often regretted that he had neglected to keep a proper government over his child; but his self-upbraidings came too late, for Michael's extravagant courses led him to commit a breach of trust, and he was compelled to be absent from his country for a number of years.

The unhappy parents changed their place

of abode, and retired to a small cottage, in an obscure country village, where they lived on the small wreck of property that Michael's extravagance had left them.

Time passed on, and the term of Michael's wanderings was ended. But during its continuance, absence and suffering had been the means of leading him to feel the need of a Saviour. The penitent son returned to his own home, and on first meeting his father, he addressed him in the language of the prodigal in the Gospel—"Father, I have sinned against heaven and against thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

At these affecting words, the heart of the parent melted, "and he fell on his son's neck and kissed him."

Michael's story was soon told, for he passed over the sufferings he had undergone as a convict, and only spoke of his deep repentance and consequent reconciliation with his offended God. "He had married the virtuous daughter of a Scotch settler," he said; "but death had taken his Anne, and all the pledges of her love, excepting little Rachel; but that heavy affliction had been the means

The Prodigal's return.

of leading him to feel the need of a Redeemer. His heart yearned for home, and he sold all his effects and embarked for America, taking with him the child, for whose sake alone he wished to live; but he had suffered shipwreck, and lost every thing but her."

The kind parents forgot all the sorrow their son had caused them, in their joy for his unexpected return; but Michael did not long survive this happy meeting, for the first spring flowers were scattered on the wanderer's grave, and he slept in peace.

Little Rachel was only three years old, at

the time of her father's death, and was extremely delicate in her constitution; but, under the judicious management of her grandmother, she soon grew healthy and beautiful. Perhaps in any other family, the little orphan might have been injured by too much indulgence; but Mrs. Maitland had suffered too much from that error, in the after conduct of her son, to fall into it again in the education of her grand-daughter.

The blindness of her grandfather, and the sudden death of her excellent grandmother, were the first sorrows Rachel had ever known, and they were severe ones; yet she met them with surprising fortitude, for her grandmother had taught her to bear troubles with patience, and thus had fitted her to meet trials with firmness and resignation to the Divine will.

Rachel, as I have said, possessed an enquiring mind, and this had led her to attempt learning French, as she wished to read some books that belonged to her father, and which were in that language; besides, she had a wish to become an instructress, for she knew that her grandfather could leave her but little, having lost a large proportion of the

property he had formerly possessed, and she was very desirous of being able to gain a respectable livelihood when death should have removed her venerable relative.

God never deserts those who put their trust in him, and he raised up a friend to the orphan in the time of need.

The mild air of Virginia is generally considered very beneficial to invalids, and the physician employed by Mrs. Somerville, a lady of great wealth, had recommended her to take her daughter into that State, for the benefit of her health, and she brought her to the beautiful and retired village where Rachel dwelt, in the hope that quietness and good nursing might restore her child again to health. The fond hopes of the parent were all centered in this only and beloved daughter, whose virtues and early piety in the tender morning of her youth gave a bright promise for maturer years, if God should please to extend their number.

Rachel had been accustomed from her childhood to assist her fellow-creatures, and though her means were small, her grandmother had taught her that even kind words

were valuable to the afflicted ; and that if she had no money to give, she could impart the knowledge of the word of God to those who could not read it for themselves. The orphan never left her grandfather for the sake of pleasure, but sometimes she stole a few minutes to devote to the sick, whose sufferings she strove to alleviate by directing their thoughts to the only true source of consolation.

Miss Somerville and Rachel.

During one of these compassionate visits, Rachel met Miss Somerville ; and if the orphan was struck with the elegant manners

of the high-bred heiress, that amiable young lady was equally charmed with the candor and good sense that marked the meek and lowly Rachel; and, with the permission of her excellent mother, she formed an intimate acquaintance with her.

Rachel had never had a companion of her own age before, and she returned Miss Somerville's regard with the warmest affection.

The young lady found her humble friend engaged one afternoon in knitting and learning French, according to her usual custom; and, praising her industry and perseverance, declared her readiness to become her preceptress, and from that time used to devote two hours daily to Rachel's instruction. The docile pupil rapidly improved under her friend's tuition, and the fair path of knowledge gradually opened on her view. She related to Miss Somerville the perplexity of mind she had formerly endured, and from what source she had obtained relief from the trouble that beset her at that time. Miss Somerville was much pleased with the anecdote. "Oh! dear Rachel," said she, "I can indeed bear witness to the truth of those words that so sweet-

ly counseled you; for what knowledge but His can sustain me in the time of sickness and decay? what wisdom but His can give me light at that hour when my dim eyes shall close upon all earthly objects?"

Rachel looked at her friend, and the conviction rushed on her mind that the lips that uttered these words would soon indeed be mute; yet those fair cheeks were tinted with the brightest dies of the rose, and the coral might vainly have vied in color with that mouth, and those eyes beamed brilliantly on every object around her; could death indeed assume the appearance of such beauty? Yet she feared the foe was within, for she had heard the experienced village matrons say, that the blush of consumption was more bright than the hues of health; and the orphan watched her young preceptress with the most painful interest, and every day beheld her fragile form become more thin, and her slender hand more white and slender still, with a grief she could scarcely conceal.

The noble mother saw the change with feelings of agony, for though religion could soften, it could not wholly subdue; she would

Rachel at Prayer.

have lost no time in conveying her to Saratoga, only Miss Somerville implored her to permit her to remain where she was.

No human power indeed could preserve the young lady from the stroke of death, and with a firmness and a hope full of immortality, she meekly bowed herself to meet the coming blow.

How happy would poor Rachel have felt, if she could have attended on her sick friend during her illness; she would have experienced a holy consolation in watching her sick bed, and smoothing her restless pillow;

but Rachel had other duties to perform, for her aged grandfather declined hourly, and required all her care.

Under all these trials, Rachel sought assistance from above, and when her health and patience were likely to give way, she used to implore health and strength from Him whose mercy never fails, and He did not forsake her in her affliction and trouble.

The feeble lamp of life at length became extinct, and Rachel closed the eyes of her last relative, and wept over him, although the consciousness of having done her duty by him, greatly softened her grief.

Scarcely had Rachel followed the remains of her grandfather to the grave—scarcely had she time to remember that she was a portionless and friendless orphan, whose future support must depend upon her own exertions—before she was summoned to witness the closing scene of her amiable and high-born preceptress.

Holy hope and peace cheered that bed of death. The meek child of prosperity, who had withstood the deceits of the world, who had despised the vain pomps, and had fixed

her mind on the true riches, was about to render up her soul into her Redeemer's hands. Yet the Christian's warfare was not yet over; earthly ties, and earthly love and friendship, still struggled in that dying heart; Miss Somerville looked on her mother, and felt that it was hard to part with that beloved friend. The cold hand of Rachel trembled in her grasp, and she was very dear to her soul; tears rushed into her eyes, but piety, and a firm trust in God, gained the victory over those sharpest stings of death.

"Weep not for me, dear mamma; mine is an early and happy death! Ah! father, rejoice that your daughter is spared the temptations and trials of longer life! The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, might have stolen my heart from God: He has called me to him in youth, and will take me away from the evil to come." She then took Rachel's hand and put it into her mother's: "See, my mother, this is your daughter; and, Rachel, this is your mother; yield her a daughter's love, for you must now take my place in her affections; now I have made my last bequest; join with me in prayer."

In united prayer, the afflicted parent, the attached and grateful friend, and all the attendants of that bed of death, joined, and Miss Somerville expired with the holy name of Him on her lips, whose footsteps she had humbly followed during her short earthly sojourn.

Mourning.

Mrs. Somerville and Rachel mingled their tears together, yet they both felt that it would be criminal even to wish to recal the blessed spirit that had just broken its earthly bonds asunder.

In the affection of her adopted child, the

bereaved mother found much comfort and consolation. Rachel resembled Miss Somerville in person, and Mrs. Somerville now took a melancholy pleasure in instructing her in those things which she had been accustomed to teach her daughter, and in a little time she used to think that it was indeed her own lamented daughter, whose duteous care prevented her every wish; Rachel became, in fact, the perfect counterpart of that fair blossom, and her adopted parent loved her with the same affection as if she had been her own child.

The orphan became a very accomplished and superior woman, and formed a high alliance; but she never forgot to praise Him in prosperity, who had been her support and refuge in her low estate, and she early taught her children, "that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."

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